

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for allowing an individual having a personal communications device an alternative access path to one or more secured components having an associated access device reader wherein the individual normally gains access to the system by at least in part positioning an access device into the access device reader, the system comprising:

at least one record that includes information about the individual, the information including information about the individual's personal communications device;

a controller having access to the at least one record wherein the controller is in communication with the one or more secured components and wherein the controller, in response to receiving a signal indicating that the individual seeking access to the one or more secured components does not have their access device, (i) retrieves information about the individual's personal communications device and (ii) sends an alternate access code to the individual and then subsequently evaluates whether the individual has provided the alternate access code back to the controller correctly to determine whether to permit access to the secured component; and

a communications interface that allows signals between the individual's communication device and the controller, wherein the controller uses the communications interface and the individual's personal communications device to allow the individual to receive or transmit the alternate access code to the controller.

2. The system of Claim 1, wherein the controller sends the alternate access code to the individual via the secured component.

3. The system of Claim 2, wherein the controller receives the alternate access code from the individual via the individual's personal communications device and the communications interface.

4. The system of Claim 3, wherein the controller, prior to allowing access verifies that (i) the alternate access code has been transmitted correctly to the controller and (ii) the alternate access code is being transmitted from a personal communications device that is registered to the individual seeking access.

5. The system of Claim 1, wherein the controller sends the alternate access code to the individual via the individual's personal communications device.

6. The system of Claim 5, wherein the controller receives the alternate access code from the individual via the individual's personal communications device and the communications interface.

7. The system of Claim 5, wherein the controller receives the alternate access code from the individual via the secured component.

8. The system of Claim 1, wherein the at least one record includes the telephone number of the individual's cellular telephone.

9. A system for limiting access to at least one secured component having an associated access device reader to only authorized individuals, wherein the system permits access to the at least one secured component when an individual provides an access device to the access device reader that is recognized as an authorized access device wherein when the individual provides an indication to the system that the individual does not possess an authorized access device, the system communicates with a personal communications device registered to the individual such that the identity of the individual is verified through the use of the personal communications device.

10. The system of Claim 9, wherein the system includes a record of personal communications devices belonging to authorized individuals.

11. The system of Claim 10, wherein the record comprises telephone numbers for the individual's cellular telephone.

12. The system of Claim 9, wherein the identity of the individual is verified by sending an access code to the individual's personal communications device and inducing the individual to transmit the access code back to the system.

13. The system of Claim 12, wherein the at least one secured component has a user input through which the individual can input the access code provided to the individual's personal communications device.

14. The system of Claim 9, wherein the system includes a display that displays an access code to the individual and a communications interface that communicates with the individual's personal communications device such that the individual transmits the access

code provided via the display to the system via their personal communications device and the communications interface.

15. The system of Claim 14, wherein the system, upon receipt of the access code verifies that the access code is being transmitted from the personal communications device registered to the individual and upon verification, then allows the individual access to the at least one secured component.

16. A method of allowing alternative access to a secured component wherein the secured component includes an access device reader and access to the access device is limited to individuals having an access device approved for accessing the secured component, the method comprising:

receiving a signal from an individual indicating that the individual does not have their access device for access to the secured component;

communicating with a personal communications device registered to the individual; and

verifying the individual's identity based upon the communications with the individual's personal communications device.

17. The method of Claim 16, wherein receiving a signal from an individual comprises receiving a signal from a user interface associated with the secured component.

18. The method of Claim 17, wherein verifying the individual's identity comprises:

sending an access code to the individual's personal communications device;

receiving a signal from the individual; and

evaluating the signal received from the individual to ascertain whether the signal includes the access code.

19. The method of Claim 18, wherein receiving a signal from the individual comprises receiving a signal from the individual's personal communications device.

20. The method of Claim 18, wherein receiving a signal from the individual comprises receiving a signal from a user interface that is associated with the secured component.

21. The method of Claim 16, further comprising allowing access upon verification of the individual's identity.

22. The method of Claim 21, wherein access is allowed when the individual transmits an appropriate access code and communication is established with the individual's personal communications device.